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The Challenge of The Ministry

by- Rev. J. B. Baker D.D.

"Men talk about making millions; they ought to make millions for not entering the ministry." —*Hillis.*

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"For myself, if I had a thousand lives I should like in this generation to go into the ministry with every one of them."

—*Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick, D.D.*

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"I am glad I am a preacher because the message I proclaim is an emancipator. It is the truth that makes men free."

—*Rev. James I. Vance, D.D.*

The Challenge of the Ministry

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A CHALLENGE involves a challenger and a challenger implies merit, as Sir Thomas Lipton, Jack Dempsey, Lincoln and Douglas and David and Goliath bear witness.

This merit many refuse to concede to the ministry. Instead of issuing a challenge they think the ministry ought to apologize for existing or, assuming the right to exist, defend the title to continued existence. Felix Adler says the pulpit is obsolete: Thoreau says that nine tenths of the clergy are noble savages, because forsooth they do not rave at bugs and slugs as he used to do, and Elbert Hubbard, ever on the broncho's neck, says that clergymen travel for half fare because they are so childish. There is no mistaking these favors, they are as positive as the odors of a glue factory.

The ministry, however, has a challenge to the boys and young men who are looking into the future and debating within themselves what to do and it has a challenge to offer to those whose careers are fixed but who have a chance to help young men in their struggle through the riffles.

The first challenge that it has to offer is the challenge of

Permanency

No man cares for a temporary job, least of all does he care to prepare himself through long years of apprenticeship and study for something which may fizzle out just about the time he has attained his greatest efficiency in it. Changing horses in the middle of the river is bad business, but that is exactly what hundreds of men have to do every year.

When the writer moved to Gettysburg 14 years ago there were liverymen there who had two, four, six, ten seaters

drawn by four and six horses, all lined up along the curb, extending from the railroad station a block and two away and when the long excursion trains poured their tourists out it took but a few minutes until the carriages were all full and the caravans moving out over the battlefields. Nothing seemed more permanent than the business of Gettysburg liverymen, since Gettysburg is bound to be a Mecca of patriotic Americans as long as America endures. Yet those vehicles have long since gone to dust, having decayed in the elements behind the stables they once filled. Fourteen years ago a carriagemaker there did a good business; he had to seek the movie business for a living. Fourteen years ago a father and son were in the stone cutting business and had a splendid trade, the concrete mixer came along and snatched their business away entirely and they are working at common labor on the battlefield in summer and hauling in winter. Fourteen years ago the town was surrounded by members of a most venerable race, a race that dated back to the Caesars—the toll-gate keepers—you couldn't leave the town without paying your tribute to them; they are all gone. Fourteen years ago a member of our church was making a comfortable living at saddlery. The auto came along and cut the business down to such an extent that he took his wife, who had never lived in the country, out on the farm. He is out there now raising hogs, while the saloon men who used to raise hogs in town are now raising boils, they are full of them and they are sore.

So the story goes. When we were children and used to read of inventions displacing hand trades we used to pity the men who stormed the factories and burned the new machines, because we knew what it meant. We, however, thought that such hardships belonged only to the last century. We were wrong. It is a hardship that becomes more menacing each year, because of the speed with which we shift our methods and our policies.

Amid this kaleidoscopic change there is no trade, profession or calling which is as sure of permanency as the Christian ministry.

The rapid sweep of reform has recently reduced the usefulness of many laudable institutions. Since Prohibition came into effect the Chicago hospital is using five hundred. fewer beds than it used before and the police department, instead of having fifty and sixty arrests on Saturday night have five or six. Water Street Mission, New York, which used to serve fifteen hundred Christmas dinners to the poor of New York in other years provided for five hundred this year. Twenty came. There will be a great reduction in police forces, jail equipments, hospital expenses, asylum attendants, and other charitable and corrective forces. A bowery mission will be as great a curiosity fifty years from now as a slave auction block is today.

But the progress of righteousness is not going to jeopardize the Christian ministry, for the simple reason that the nearer a man draws to God the more he will love God's house and the message from God's throne. Even if the time should ever come when Christians will no more need to sing,

"Rescue the perishing,
Care for the dying,
Jesus is merciful,
Jesus will save."

they will go on their higher, happier way, singing,

"Sweeter as the years go by,
Sweeter as the years go by,
Richer, fuller, deeper,
Jesus love is sweeter,
Sweeter as the years go by."

To lead a group of jubilant saints like that "upward to Zion" is a privilege which angels well might covet.

The first challenge therefore of the ministry is the challenge of permanency.

The next challenge of the ministry is the challenge of

Territory

Did you ever notice the jingle in the tones of a general manager? There is something unmistakable about his whole demeanor, first because he must be an unusual man or he would not have the territory; secondly because he naturally feels his importance. I like to talk with a general manager—his talk is usually big in every way, and if he is not too hilarious over himself, refreshing as it is big.

There isn't a man on earth, there isn't a business on earth which has the territory that the ministry has.

The Standard Oil Company is usually supposed to cover the earth, in fact sometimes credited with owning it, but what business could the Standard Oil Company do up in northern Alaska where the whale and the seal and the walrus supply the oil? The missionary does business there and a good business too. Close behind John D. is Henry with his Fords, which "chatter, chatter, as they go," but what business could Ford do up on the snow capped Alps? The monks with their St. Bernard dogs and their hospice are there saving the lost and ministering to them and have been there these many years. What business could fur dealers do in Central Africa? You may hang a set of furs around an American girl in African weather but the African belles don't belong in that ward. Christianity can do business there and is enlarging its operations all the time.

How many self-binders could you sell in China, where the staff of life is rice? They are taking the book-binders and the principal wheat with increasing avidity. How many safety razors could you sell in an Old Ladies' Home, how many vanity boxes in an Old Men's Home? You could carry the gospel there and they would receive it with tears of joy. I know, because I have taken it there.

Some men must stop with their goods at territorial boundaries. No man dare bring liquor into the United States henceforth.

Some men must stop with their goods at climatic boundaries. Who could sell fly netting in Iceland or ice skates in Cuba?

Some must stop at racial boundaries. Kipling says:

"The east is east and the west is west,
And the twain will never meet."

You can't sell a Chinaman high heeled shoes nor an American a loose flowing robe. You can sell the gospel to them all and it is bound to capture the markets of the world, for none can undersell you. Who ever told his men to go out and sell, "without money and without price?" That is exactly what God commissions His ministers to do.

Territory! why there isn't a business in the world which offers half the territory which the Christian ministry offers. So young man while you are weighing the pros and cons remember the territory you will have if you enter the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Another challenge which the ministry offers is the challenge of

A Noble Lineage

There is not quite as much in a noble lineage as some people imagine. When we hear people bragging of their ancestry we often wonder whether they are not also related to the peanut family, with the best part under the ground. When a Revolutionary soldier or a signer is asked to throw the mantle of sanctity over some modern rogue or the mantle of efficiency over a modern microbe, just because he happened to bear his name or has come with various accretions from his loins he is certainly asked to work over time without extra pay.

The spirit was prevalent in the days of Christ. He was constantly hearing them brag that they were the children of Abraham. Eighteen hundred years after Abraham died they still made him their boast, when the only resemblance between them and Abraham was their face and their fertility.

But while there is not much in ancestry as some people imagine there is something in it. You know your feelings when you see the pictures of the Presidents, the pictures of the Poets, the Inventors, the Singers, the great Hymn Writ-

ers. They throw you into something akin to worship. You stand on holy ground, and if one of their descendants were to confront you you would want to grasp his hand and feel that you came within a link of a master. Much greater would be your reverence if you could listen to one of the masters himself.

The ministry of Jesus Christ not only introduces you to a line more noble than all, but invites you to come into and become a part of it. If you could go to some down town photographer or artist and have a life sized likeness of yourself made and then go and hang it in one of the halls of the White House, which many hope to do but which few will do, since "many are called but few are chosen," what a privilege that would be. That is exactly what Jesus Christ invites you to do when He tells you to preach the Word and become a standard bearer of redeeming grace. He asks you to come in and take your place in the line that began on the Mount of Beatitudes and will reach to the great White Throne, the line that has in it Jesus Himself and Paul and John and Augustine, Huss, Luther, Wesley, Whitfield, Edwards, Spurgeon, Moody, Talmage, Beecher, and thousands of others, who compose the mightiest order that ever tracked its way across the desert sands of time.

It is a privilege as well as an inspiration to belong to this order of men. I yield to no one in my respect for all honest labor, I believe with Carlyle that there is only one monster in this world, the idle man, yet with a regard akin to veneration for all labor, I would rather be a member of this order than of any other order on earth, whether it be civil, military, fraternal, educational and any other. I would rather be an heir to this lineage than to the lineage of any other, not because these men preached such wonderful sermons and had such a wonderful following but because of the wonderful work they did.

There has been no braver set of men than the ministry holds. All but two of the original disciples sealed their testimony with their blood. The scarlet line runs from there to France without a break.

In olden days an insult to the king was often equivalent to a death sentence, yet Nathan told David his sin so plainly that he sent him to nights of weeping.

When Latimer paid his New Year's visit to that Bluebeard of lust, Henry VIII, he gave him a Bible as a gift, with the page turned down at the words, "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." John the Baptist paid with his life for talking that way to Herod. When Emperor Theodosius slew seven thousand citizens of Thessalonica and returned to Milan to enter the assembly of the saints, as was his custom, Bishop Ambrose turned him away and sent him into eight months of penitence and tears. Even more dangerous than offending kings was an offense against the rulers of the Church. Listen to Savonarola in the days of the Church's corruption. "Oh harlot church: thou hast made thy deformity apparent to all the world! thou hast multiplied thy fornications in Italy, in France, in Spain, in every country." Knox preached with a musket leveled at his head. Judson bared his breast to the fierce South African natives and told them to stab him if they would. On Flanders' Field, "where poppies grow," there lie chaplains and Seminary students by the thousands, just as they lay with their comrades above the ground before they "went west." Among those who came back were thousands of others, many of them coming back with the brands of war deep burned in their flesh. It was so in the Civil War, it was so in the Revolution. We shall never forget Clifford and Conwell and Trumbull and Muhlenburg. They stand out like rocks upon the mountains, from which we can sweep the horizon unmeasured miles around.

Great in battle, this royal line reaching back to Jesus, has been equally great in reform. The biggest man in the abolition of slavery was Lyman Beecher, whose sermon on the sovereignty of God made Wendell Phillips an agitator and whose fearless genius gave his daughter the passion for "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and his son the eloquence to save England for the North and a united democracy for the world.

Lyman Beecher was worth any thousand men of the Civil War, for it is harder to start a big body than to keep it

going. But Lyman Beecher was only one of ten thousand pulpit orators who opened the volleys of divine wrath upon human slavery, as Sam Small is only one of the fifty thousand Elijahs who have denounced old Red-nosed Barleycorn and sent him to his grave. Beginning with Paul's world brotherhood and coming down by Luther's democracy to the reforms still unwon you can't find one in which the clergy hasn't put the heft into the axe.

Not only have the sky pilots been of incalculable worth to the world in destroying old abuses; they have also been the best pioneers of civilization the world has ever had and have been of as much economic value as tradesmen.

When missions were mentioned for India the East India Company said the sending of missionaries to evangelize India was the maddest dream that ever entered the mind of man. After the missionaries were there some time however, Sir Rivers Thompson said "Christian missions have accomplished more for the good of India than all other agencies combined." A colonial Governor may not have a keen discrimination on the qualities of sky pilots but he does not need a divining rod to tell him when his people are prospering. The ministry carried the gospel to India.

The ministry has rendered an inestimable service to education. Do you know how Yale was founded? In the year 1700 ten ministers assembled in the village of Bradford, a few miles east of New Haven. Each of them came with an arm full of books. Each of them walked up to the table around which they were sitting, deposited the books there and said, "I give these books for the founding of a college in this colony." There is hardly a college in the world which was not founded or inspired by the Christian ministry.

Ah, friend, if you want to enter an order that has made a real record, a record that will stand the heat of judgment fire and prove chaff when the all-seeing eye looks full upon it, enter the Christian ministry. It challenges you with the best lineage upon this earth.

Because of its wonderful lineage it offers you also another wonderful challenge, the challenge of

Prestige

It is true of course that prestige isn't as big a factor in a big city as it is in a small town. A chub in a tub makes more splash than a whale in the sea and our little conceits soon shrink when we reach the metropolis. A prophet of the wilderness stormed into Parkes Cadman's study sometime since and said, "I came to take New York for Christ." Cadman said, "All right, suppose you take a chair first, we'll talk it over." He put him at something he could do, which was probably all he ever did at home.

Prestige in a little town and prestige in a big city are two entirely different things but the fact still remains that a minister goes into a community with fewer prejudices against him, fewer suspicions concerning him and more things in his favor than any other man. The world has so much sorrow and is in need of so much guidance for childhood and youth, so much comfort for the aged and so much solace for the mourning that a community immediately looks with high regard toward the new minister. It has no fears at all but does have hope.

Even the cynical pay tribute to the minister. Carlyle wasn't much given to compliments. It was the least of his ailments. One day as he sat at his window and watched the crowd go by, he said, "Nine out of every ten men are fools and I would not like to say too much about the tenth." He was a scathing critic of every person who didn't ring true, yet when he referred to an old obscure preacher to whose church he went as a boy, he said, "The marks of that man are upon me."

Friend and foe in one way or another concede the prestige of the gospel ministry and it is a privilege to have it, for you are not building on mud when you have that beneath you.

Think of this prestige, young man, when making your choice. It is a decided factor in favor of the ministry.

Another challenge which the ministry has to offer, and the greatest of all, is the challenge of

This in fact is the call. Many a young man hesitates to start for the ministry because he hasn't heard a voice or seen a flaming cross in the sky or had a dream making his duty plain. Do you need a voice when you see flames creeping along the eaves and know there is a family asleep in the house?

A Cumberland Valley engineer stopped his midnight train a few years ago to arouse a farmer's sleeping family and save them from a death in flames. Do you need a vision from heaven to tell you your duty when you see a struggling swimmer out in the surf? The need is the loudest call God ever gave to man, and this forms the loudest challenge from the ministry.

There are those who think that the magazine and the forum have become so popular that they have reduced the service of the pulpit to a minimum and left the preacher with little else to do than baptize the babies, marry the betrothed and bury the dead. If that were all he had to do there would be no need of apology even then, for if he would attend to those and follow them up as he ought to he would have all that any man would care to give an account of on the judgment Day.

But that isn't all that he has to do. He has the same pardon to offer to the sin—enslaved race he always had to offer and that is a wonderful service as well as a wonderful privilege. I never read of the crew that carried the news of freedom to San Domingo and shouted, "Free!" across the waters to the people who stood on shore, without wishing I might have been among them. I never read of the patriots breaking into the castle of Chillon and shouting "Free!" to Bonnivard, six years chained to a pillar, without wishing I might have been with them. Oh, it is wonderful to announce pardon to any man, but where is the pardon that brings the thrill that the pardon of Almighty God brings? Where is the pardon that is as sweeping and as permanent? George III issued a proc-

lamation of pardon to all our Revolutionary forefathers, except John Hancock and Patrick Henry, provided that they lay down their arms. The herald of Christ can offer pardon to every John and every Patrick this old world produces. An old cobbler walking the streets of Nantucket said, "There is hope for you John," to the town drunkard, and lo drunken John was born again into the great John B. Gough.

The ministry is great in the pardon that it brings and great in the points of contact that it has with humanity. The school teacher gets them in their teens, the college professor gets them in their youth, the doctor gets them when they are sick, the dentist gets them when they are sore, the lawyer gets them when they are in trouble, the undertaker gets them when they are dead. The preacher touches them at every point from the cradle to the grave.

It is true that much of the work is "unhonored and unsung" by the world, but the trees and the rocks that fill a cave-in are as important as the shining rails on which the engine runs.

Nor is the fact that many churches are more than half empty a proof that the pulpit has lost its function or its service in modern life; the only thing it proves is that some pulpits have lost their connection either with the people or with God. A broken connection at either the magneto or the spark plugs will stall your car.

He who knows his people, his message and his God will not want for hearers. He will have them the year around and no other man on earth can duplicate it.

For service to man's deepest needs, for points of contact, for sustained opportunities there is no call on earth to equal the Christian ministry.

Remember that young men when you approach the block and begin to chisel.

Contrary also to current opinion the Christian ministry has a challenge of

Compensation

The ministry is the best paid calling in the world. Do I mean to say that ministers are endowing universities? No but they are near the average income of their congregation. That puts him in the thick of the crowd, exactly where he ought to be as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was ever in the midst of the multitude. Were the minister up with the plungers who make money by the thousands, or back with the pinched and pauperized, he would be out of his place. He is exactly where he ought to be, in the midst of the multitude, with

"Enough to meet stern nature's ends,
And a little left to treat his friends."

holding a position from which he can deal intelligently and sympathetically with both the rich man and the poor man.

In all things necessary for bodily comfort, both for himself and family, the minister of the gospel fares as well as the average and if he knows how to work and keeps his feet off the radiator, better than the average. If you doubt it, go through his house, look at his pictures, his library, his dinner table, his wardrobes, and you will be convinced.

But man "doth not live by bread alone." A great deal of the minister's pay never enters the monthly check. It comes from individual members and it is not all sausage either.

One day when Guy Marks Pearce was sitting with Spurgeon in his pulpit, as the offering was being taken, he leaned over and said to Mr. Spurgeon, "Doctor, when I was a young man I used to come every Sunday evening to hear you here and you will never know how much good you used to do me. You used to wind me up like an eight-day clock." "Is that so," said Spurgeon, "thank God for that."

But that was Spurgeon and to be expected. The same thing comes the way of the humblest herald. Only a few Sundays ago one of the most pious of our men, a godly father, who has been a priest in his household as few fathers have, lingered after the evening service and went along into the study beside

the pulpit for a little chat. In the course of his conversation he referred to a sermon we had preached shortly before Christmas on "John in Jail." He said, "I was in jail that day myself, but when you said that even with John's doubts Christ said that he was the greatest ever born of woman, that lifted me higher than the stars." Ah, that is more than gold. Business men often talk about helping a fellow out of a hole and it is a laudable operation, but I would ten thousand times rather lift a man higher than the stars than pull him out of a million holes. Pulling a man out of a hole usually means putting him on his feet financially, lifting him higher than the stars means taking him up to God in whose presence is "fullness of joy."

So rich is this remuneration of the ministry that when Joseph Parker was asked what his hobby was he replied "preaching," and when asked what his hobby was aside from preaching he replied, "There is nothing aside from preaching."

He meant of course for himself.

Robert Lowry, the author of "Shall we gather at the River," "I need Thee Every Hour," "We're Marching to Zion," and a host of other popular hymns and who knew the applause of thousands because of his hymns, said, "I would rather preach a gospel sermon to an appreciative audience than write a hymn."

But the remuneration of the ministry is not exhausted in the check and the words of sincere appreciation here. He has also an annuity laid up for him in heaven.

Old John Vredenberg, of Somerville, N. J., was a consecrated man of God and true to every duty. No one ever doubted his piety, his orthodoxy or his works. But his results were meager, his gleanings small. Many in half the time had gathered more into the kingdom than he did. Feeling that he had been faithful in small things he closed his eyes in peace and was carried out to the bosom of his ancient mother.

Within a year or two two hundred people gathered around the altars of Somerville to profess their faith in Jesus Christ and the remarkable thing about it was that most of

them traced their early religious impressions back to the ministry of John Vredenburg. Among the two hundred were the parents of the great Talmage whose sermons were printed weekly in forty different languages and scattered for a quarter of a century over the face of the earth. Do you think John Vredenberg knows nothing of it, because he left his baggage here and hasn't sent for it? Must you have all with you that you ever owned to enjoy the gratitude of a friend in a distant city? No doubt all of the two hundred have by this time crossed the flood; the elder Talmages and their greater son have and by their very presence are making heaven doubly sweet to the old man who thought he had never done anything but chop wood and carry water.

Ah, these are the things that make us bold to challenge you young men to enter the ministry. Even though there are still some crustaceans who pledge the Lord to keep their preacher poor if He will keep him humble, the ministry is the best paid calling in all the world.

If, therefore, you are looking for a job with good pay, ponder well the remuneration of the ministry.

To take a bird's-eye view of the whole situation, these are the things you ought to consider in determining your career:

1. Permanency.
2. Territory.
3. Lineage.
4. Prestige.
5. Service.
6. Remuneration.

If the ministry seems to offer these to you in richer measure than any other calling, then think long before you leap into other waters. You may come back if you leap into the wrong hole, but it will be hard swimming. I have spent many years in a College and Seminary town and have seen many wanderers return, some after ten years. You can't run away from God and be happy. Trying to run away from the ministry will make a wandering Jew out of a Gentile.

Don't try it.

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"Redeeming Love has been my theme for over fifty years and I wish I could have another fifty."

—*Rev. Alexander Whyte, D.D.*

"So with the Lord, He takes and He
refuses,
Finds Him ambassadors whom
He may;
Wise ones, nor mighty for His saints
He chooses
But such as John or Gideon, or I."